



Missouri State
U N I V E R S I T Y

BearWorks

[MSU Graduate Theses](#)

Spring 2017

Factors Impacting a Community Based Poverty Project: An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Communication through a Case Study Approach

Miranda Kay Wickam

As with any intellectual project, the content and views expressed in this thesis may be considered objectionable by some readers. However, this student-scholar's work has been judged to have academic value by the student's thesis committee members trained in the discipline. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://bearworks.missouristate.edu/theses>



Part of the [Communication Sciences and Disorders Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wickam, Miranda Kay, "Factors Impacting a Community Based Poverty Project: An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Communication through a Case Study Approach" (2017). *MSU Graduate Theses*. 3164.
<https://bearworks.missouristate.edu/theses/3164>

This article or document was made available through BearWorks, the institutional repository of Missouri State University. The work contained in it may be protected by copyright and require permission of the copyright holder for reuse or redistribution.

For more information, please contact BearWorks@library.missouristate.edu.

**FACTORS IMPACTING A COMMUNITY BASED POVERTY PROJECT:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION
THROUGH A CASE STUDY APPROACH**

A Masters Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, Communication Sciences and Disorders

By

Miranda Wickam

May 2017

Copyright 2017 by Miranda Kay Wickam

FACTORS IMPACTING A COMMUNITY BASED POVERTY PROJECT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION THROUGH A CASE STUDY APPROACH

Communication Sciences and Disorders

Missouri State University, May 2017

Master of Science

Miranda Wickam

ABSTRACT

Parental involvement has been related to higher student achievement. While the professional literature provides exemplars of effective communication strategies between home and school, the impact of factors such as cultural and economic diversity and the efficacy of specific approaches remains an important area of inquiry. The purpose of this study was to investigate the various communication strategies used within a community driven development (CDD) project in an economically depressed zone in a metropolitan city in the Midwest. Focus groups, interviews, and a project report were the data points. An *a priori* coding system of two present themes, opportunities and barriers, were used to develop common sub themes. While the emerged data showed many overlapping opportunities and barriers identified by both staff and CDD participants, the staff identified twice as many barriers as compared to the participants. Educators should try and enable strategies to promote opportunities, as well as provide support strategies for the identified barriers paying close attention to individuals who represent various forms of economic, cultural, ethnic, racial, and disability differences.

KEYWORDS: communication strategies, community driven development project, economically depressed zone, education, parent teacher communication

This abstract is approved as to form and content

Karen Engler, EdD, CED
Chairperson, Advisory Committee
Missouri State University

**FACTORS IMPACTING A COMMUNITY BASED POVERTY PROJECT:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION
THROUGH A CASE STUDY APPROACH**

By

Miranda Wickam

A Masters Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College
Of Missouri State University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Science, Communication Sciences and Disorders

May 2017

Approved:

Karen S. Engler, EdD

Christopher Craig, EdD

Mary Ann Jennings, PhD

Julie Masterson, PhD: Dean, Graduate College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Research Questions.....	3
Limitations.....	3
Definitions.....	4
Review of the Literature.....	6
Current Parent-Teacher Communication Strategies.....	8
Effects of Poverty.....	16
The Model and the Community.....	18
Methods.....	24
Participants.....	24
Data Collection.....	26
Data Analysis.....	28
Results.....	29
Focus Group Demographics.....	29
Opportunities to Enhance Communication – Focus Groups.....	32
Barriers Preventing Communication – Focus Groups.....	37
Staff Interview Demographics.....	40
Opportunities to Enhance Communication – Staff Interviews.....	41
Barriers Preventing Communication – Staff Interviews.....	45
Discussion.....	49
Research Question One.....	49
Research Question Two.....	51
Comparing Research Question One and Two.....	53
Research Questions Three.....	54
Consideration of Findings.....	56
Future Research.....	56
References.....	58
Appendices.....	63
Appendix A. Informed Consent – CDD Participants.....	63
Appendix B. Informed Consent – Staff Participants.....	65
Appendix C. Focus Group with CDD Participant Questions.....	67
Appendix D. One-on-One Structured Staff Interview Questions.....	68

Appendix E. Focus Group One Expanded Set of Questions69

Appendix F. Focus Group Two Expanded Set of Questions70

Appendix G. Focus Group Three Expanded Set of Questions71

LIST OF TABLES

1. Focus Group – Presence of Change of Aspirational Assets	32
2. Focus Group – Opportunities to Enhance Communication	34
3. Focus Group – Barriers Preventing Communication.....	38
4. Staff Member Titles and Descriptions	41

INTRODUCTION

After the 2001 enactment of No Child Left Behind, there has been a greater prominence on increasing parent's involvement in their child's education (Thompson, 2008). Research has shown that one of the most successful outlets for involving parents is for the parent or caregiver to stay in constant communication with their student's teacher. Communication is used to assist in building and fostering the essential relationship between families and educational professionals (McNaughton et al., 2008).

Effective parent-teacher communication can frequently lead, both the parent and teacher, to having a full understanding of what the students need to reach their full potential. When both parties have this shared understanding, they are better prepared to assist the student in making the most progress (Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012). However, the research has show that more often, parent-teacher communication is infrequent and most often used to relay problems. This may cause parents to feel negative about communication in general (Howell, Caldarella, Korth, & Young, 2014).

Communicating with a teacher is a complex multi-step task and parents often find it difficult to do because of time the time required, or they may feel underqualified academically to efficiently participate in the conversation (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011).

To attempt at communicating effectively with parents, teachers implement different strategies. These strategies include computer-mediated communication (ex. E-mail, instant messaging, social media networks, etc.), home visits, parent-teacher conferences, personalized student notes, and parent-teacher curriculum. Each of these strategies has its own benefits and challenges, however, there is minimal research on how

the human condition can affect these strategies. Teacher often find it difficult to foster successful parent-teacher communication when the family has a different background and culture of their own (Meyer, Mann, & Becker 2011).

Statement of Problem

While the professional literature provides exemplars of effective communication strategies between home and school (Bennett-Conroy, 2012; Dubis & Bernadowski, 2014; Jenson, 2006; Manz, 2012; Pillet-Shore, 2015; Thompson, 2008;), the impact of factors such as cultural and economic diversity and the efficacy of specific approaches remains an important area of inquiry when taking into account the complexities of the human condition in today's world. Communication and outreach strategies used by the professions of social work and other disciplines actively engaged in helping under resourced families may bring a better understanding of how certain forms of human diversity dictates the quality of the relationship and understanding between the school and the home. A metropolitan city in the Midwest region has been characterized by national poverty consultants as program rich, but system poor. Better communication approaches might build better systems for the provision of services, including the education of school age students representing all forms of human diversity, including those with disabilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the various communication strategies used within a community driven development project. This took place in an economically

depressed zone in a metropolitan city in the Midwest. This study was associated with an \$1.3 Million project to assist under resourced families and the various communication strategies employed which take into account the human condition.

Research Questions

The researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do staff in the community driven development project perceive specific strategies for communication and participation with the home to be effective in facilitating greater participation in the project and progress to identified goals?
2. To what extent do identified families for inclusion in the community driven development project perceive specific strategies for communication and participation with the home to be effective in facilitating greater participation in the project and progress to identified goals?
3. In what ways do the approaches utilized by project staff for the community driven development project have application for enhancing better home/school communication for school age students, which represent various forms of economic, cultural, ethnic, racial, and disability differences?

Limitations

The results of this study are going to be indicative to the economically depressed zone in a metropolitan city in the Midwest. This study will tell a story about one scenario that is going on within this area. Although the results of this study cannot be generalized, application for enhancing better home/school communication for school age students may be found and utilized.

Participants of the CDD project have varied experiences and level of involvement within the project. Participants who are heavily involved and in continuous communication with the staff at the CDD project may be less willingly to open up about a

negative experience they may have had. Participants who are more withdrawn and have infrequent communication with the staff the CDD project may be more willing to share a negative experience they have had. Both sets of participants could skew the data.

One-to-one interviews were limited to the perspectives of more immediate staff. Families within this CDD project are often referred out to additional non-for-profits for additional assistance. Interviews held were inclusive to staff member who were directly employed through the CDD.

Qualitative research relies on description, analysis, and interpretation (Amos, 2002). While researchers often contend that all findings are supported from verifiable data, the argument can be made that the data could be subjective and partial to the researchers own personal opinion and background (Amos, 2002). Amos states that researchers must "...concentrate on reflexively applying their own subjectivities in ways that make it possible to understand the tacit motives and assumptions of their own," (pg. 9).

Definitions

Following are the definitions of key terms used within this study:

Community-driven development (CDD) – "A mechanism for enhancing sustainability, improving efficiency and effectiveness, allowing poverty reduction efforts to be taken to scale, making development more inclusive, empowering poor people, building social capital, strengthening governance, and complementing market and public sector activities" (Mansuri & Rao, 2004 p. 2).

Family – A family is defined as an adult who is the caretaker for a child. In this study, the family does not have to be a nuclear family with two parents and children.

Parent-Teacher Communication – This term is defined as close communication between a student's parent and a student's teacher in order to benefit the student's education.

Poverty – This term is defined as, "...the extent to which an individual does without resources" (Payne, 2013 p. 7).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Since 2001, parents have become increasingly more involved in their child's education due to the passing of No Child Left Behind (Thompson, 2008). Parental involvement has been associated with higher student achievement (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011, Thompson, 2008). In addition, when parents are involved in their student's education, students are more likely to have fewer behavioral problems (Hesse, Rauscher, Roberts, & Oretgea, 2004). In fact, research has shown that, students in grades first through eighth have superior reading scores when their parent and teacher communicate regularly (Bennett-Conroy, 2012). When parents are distance and uninvolved with their student's education, students are more likely to have lower self-esteem and more communication breakdowns (Hesse et al., 2004).

With the push to recruit parents to be more involved in their child's education, many different models have been created. One of the most widely referenced models of parental involvement is the Epstein Model (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The Epstein Model has six main components, one of which is family communication (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Because parents and teachers spend time with the students in two very valuable but different environments, they each have respected information to be share about the student and the education they are receiving in the different environments (Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007). Parents and teachers use communication to have efficient and effective collaboration (McNaughton, Hamlin, McCarthy, Head-Reeves, & Schreiner, 2008).

Parent-teacher communication has many benefits. Communication can help in building a necessary relationship between families and education professionals

(McNaughton et al., 2008). In addition, communication between parents and teachers provide the opportunity to be in daily contact to discuss their students' academic, social, or behavioral strengths or weaknesses (Dubis & Bernadowski, 2014) Effective parent-teacher communication can lead to the parent and teacher both having a full understanding of what the student needs to succeed. When both parties have this full understanding, they are better equip to assist the student in all of their educational needs (Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012).

Some parents often feel that they do not have the level of knowledge capable to understand curriculum or to participate in conversation with academic professionals. Communicating with a teacher can be a complex multi-step task and parents can find it difficult to do because of time or feeling underqualified academically to efficiently participate in the conversation (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011). However, parents who are more involved and willing to communicate, are often able to obtain the knowledge necessary to not only participate but add a key element to these conversations (Gonzalez, Borders, Hines, Villalba, & Henderson, 2013). Higher rated schools and programs typically have an emphasis on family communication (McNaughton et al., 2008).

Parent-teacher communication is one of the most stressed practices by schools to keep their parents involved in their student's education (Symeou et al., 2012). However, it does not come without its challenges. More common than not, parent-teacher communication is infrequent and used to relay problems causing parents to feel negative about having to participate (Howell, Caldarella, Korth, & Young, 2014). Whether in a conscious effort or not, schools can make parents feel as though they are not welcome in participating in their child's education and should not question the academic

professionals (Symeou et al., 2012). Even if teachers and parents find a way to communicate, if they do not agree upon the topic at hand, communication can be ineffective. For example, there are a significant number of parents who do not see the value in school rules or codes of conduct and will not reinforce them (Strom, P., & Strom, R., 2002). While schools prefer to generate two-way communication, it is often viewed as a one-way track from school to home with teachers and administrators controlling content (Strom, P., & Strom, R., 2002).

To further understand the influence of family communication on a student's education, we must understand the many facets that can impact it. In the remainder of the review of the literature, different communication strategies teachers are currently using to communicate with parents will be explained. The next section will define poverty and how living in poverty can impact a student's education. The conclusion of the review of the literature will define community driven development and investigate different projects that are currently in place.

Current Parent-Teacher Communication Strategies

There is little research on how the human condition can affect the way teachers can effectively communicate with their families. Teachers are currently implementing different strategies to use within their classroom. These strategies include computer-mediated communication (ex. E-mail, instant messaging, social media networks, etc.), home visits, parent-teacher conferences, personalized student notes, and parent-teacher curriculum.

Computer Mediated Communication. As technology has evolved, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become more and more prevalent. When CMC is used to communicate with the parents, teachers have noted that there is an increase in parental involvement, specifically in the elementary and secondary levels (Thompson, 2008). While there are several different modes of CMC to be utilized within in the classroom, one of the most often used methods is electronic mail (e-mail) (Thompson, 2008).

It has been noted during the past decade that parents and teachers communicating via e-mail allows for more accessibility of our teachers and more involvement of our parents. (Thompson, 2008). In fact, the findings of Dubis and Bernadowski (2015) showed that both parents and teachers are willing to participate in communicating through e-mail to improve the home to school relationship. When parents and teachers are able to communicate through e-mail with consistency and ease, the quality of parent-teacher relationships is able to improve. (Thompson, 2008).

Thompson (2008) yielded results that showed us what parents and teachers communicated most often about in their e-mail exchanges. After analyzing 341 parent-teacher e-mails it was found that the topics most commonly discussed through e-mail were grades if a student was struggling and scheduling (conferences, setting up meeting times, etc.) This study also disclosed that the parents usually initiated the e-mails and they were kept short and to the point.

While communicating through e-mail has been shown to increase accessibility (Thompson, 2008; Dubis & Bernadowski, 2015), some studies have yielded negative results from this form of CMC. CMC, including e-mail communication, does not

emphasize any personal communication (Thompson, 2008). If teachers are not cognizant of the way they are communicating with their parents, their communication can become more focused on completing task as opposed to facilitating a relationship. (Thompson, 2008). Teachers also run the risk of e-mails being intercepted by the wrong recipient (Strom, P & Strom, R., 2002). Strom and Strom (2002) reported that if students knew a bad report was being sent home to their parents, they were more likely to try and intercept the message, including deleting e-mails and phone messages. Strom and Strom (2002) also noted that some parents may not have e-mail and some who do have e-mail may not be willing to use it. Because of these variables, educators are cautioned to assess their use of CMC when communicating with parents. (Thompson, 2008).

Home Visits. Home visits are also a way for teachers to communicate with their families. During a home visit, the teacher will meet with the parents in their home environment and communicate with them about their child. When participating in a home visit, teachers and parents have the opportunity to create a connection between home and school and increase the parent's involvement in their student's education (Meyer & Mann, 2006). A unique aspect of home visits is that it gives the teacher the opportunity to learn and understand their student and families in their everyday environment (Meyer et al., 2011). According to Manz (2012) having a home-based component when communicating with families allows for the teacher "...to design and implement cross-setting interventions for enhancing care-giver involvement..." (p 236).

Studies on home visits have demonstrated that there can be many positive effects on the parent, teacher, and the student as well. Meyer & Mann (2006) did home visits with 26 elementary teachers to 363 students. The teachers reported the students were

more prepared. In addition, there was an increase in student attendance and parent involvement. The teachers believed that the aforementioned positive outcomes led to increased student success.

Some teachers also set goals with the parents during their first home visit. It was reported that 84% of these goals were met. Meyer et al. (2011) did a five year follow up to the study previously mentioned. Their results showed that teachers reported better relationships, improved communication, appreciation of the home environment, and a better understanding of the child's behaviors. Children that participated in these studies had better self-esteem, improved homework habits and school attendance which lead to higher student achievement and fewer behavior problems (Meyer et al., 2011).

Studies have also shown that home visits are not always the best option for communication. Manz (2012) yielded that two-parent families had better success with home visits than other family types. It was also found that home visits require a more significant amount of effort and time from the teacher. Teachers have to schedule, drive, and participate in every home visit. Teachers with a large number of students simply may not be able to complete all of the home visits required of them.

Parent-Teacher Conferences. Parent-teacher conferences have been used to communicate with parents for decades. Pillet-Shore (2015) stated that parent-teacher conferences are a time for parents and teachers to come together and assess the students current state and develop strategies for areas of improvement. Because teachers have already assessed the students current level of performance, family members often do not view this part of the conference as something to discuss (Pillet-Shore, 2015). However, parent-teacher conferences give the teacher the opportunity to emphasize the family's

important role in the decision making process of their student's education (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2011). Cheatham and Ostrosky (2011) analyzed parent-teacher conferences from an early childhood center and then did follow up interviews with teachers and parents. Their findings stated that teachers viewed the conferences as a time to foster a positive relationship that was built on trust. They also viewed this time as an opportunity for, "...empowering parents to address their children's difficulties and learning" (29). Parents viewed this time as a chance to gain advice from the teacher about strategies to implement at home. Overall, an overarching theme of teachers giving advice and parents receiving the advice was developed.

While parents and teachers can gain essential information about their students during conference times, if not implemented correctly, these times can be perceived as stressful and even traumatic for both parents and teachers (Pillet-Shore, 2016). Parent may often feel anxious before, during, and even after the conference. Some parents fear that if the teacher is criticizing their student, the teacher is indirectly criticizing their parenting (Pillet-Shore, 2016). At the same time, teachers feel this is one of the most common times that they feel challenged by another about their professional abilities (Pillet-Shore, 2016).

Personalized Notes. Teacher's often used personalized notes to communicate with not only the parents, but the students as well. Personalized notes are individualized messages from the teacher that get sent home with the students for the them to share with their parents (Kraft & Rogers, 2015). When teachers use personalized notes as a way to praise their students, they have the opportunity to positively influence the student's classroom behaviors, as well as their personal relationship with the student and family

(Howell et al., 2014). Personalized notes have been deemed a cost effective approach (Kraft & Rogers, 2015) and way for teachers to give parents information about what events are going on at school, the student's behavior in the classroom, and the teacher expectations of that student (Howell et al., 2014).

Kraft and Rogers (2015) had teachers in a high school credit recovery program send one-sentence personal notes home with high school students weekly with the hopes of increasing parental involvement and student success. Their study concluded that messages that emphasized behaviors the student needed to improve on had the largest impact. The individualized messages also helped reduce the percentage of students who failed summer course from 16% to 9%. Howell et al. (2014) conducted a similar study with a group of students in a Title I elementary school. However, the notes sent home with these students were praise notes. This study concluded that, "...praise notes helped improve classroom behavior, relationships, and home-school communication" (Howell et al., 2014, p. 22). Parents indicated that they believed praise notes were an essential part of their communication with their student's teacher. It was noted that parents often indicated teacher-parent communication could be negative (i.e. when their student had broken a school code, poor grades, etc.) but personalized praise notes were a positive form of communication coming home.

Howell et al. (2014) also noted that while praise notes can be positive, others have questioned the validity of them and how they can control a student's intrinsic motivation and achievement. It should be noted that while personalized notes, whether positive, neutral, or negative, do have constructive attributes, there are some risks teachers have to consider when using them as a form of parent-teacher communication. When

communicating with parents through documents that rely on student delivery, teachers have found that these documents run the risk of not reaching the students parent or guardian (Strom, P., & Strom, R., 2002).

Parent-Teacher Curriculum. The last strategy to be discussed is parent-teacher curriculum. These are programs that are developed and implemented to support both the teacher and the parent. An example of a parent-teacher curriculum is teaching both parents and teachers active listening skills. McNaughton et al. (2008) define active listening as "...a multistep process, including making empathetic comments, asking appropriate questions, and paraphrasing and summarizing for the purposes of verification." Active listening strategies are taught and incorporated into parent-teacher communication to ensure that the speaker concerns are being understood and the recipient is doing everything they can to keep the communicate clear (McNaughton et al., 2008).

McNaughton et al. (2008) conducted a study to assess how effective teachers and parents viewed active listening skills. A pre and posttest was administered to 30 preschool and school aged parents after participating in a conference with teacher candidates or teachers who had sufficient training in being an active listener. The results of this study showed the experimental groups post test scores to be more than 2.67 standard deviations different than the control groups post test results. The experimental group of parents reported that they viewed the use of active listening strategies during their conferences to be positive and effective (McNaughton et al., 2008).

Another parent-teacher curriculum being implemented is Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) (Bennett-Conroy, 2012). Bennett-Conroy (2012) defines TIPS as, "...structured, two-page worksheets that guide students to work together with a

family member to complete curriculum-based homework assignments.” TIPS homework assignments are created to guide the parents on how they can assist their student to complete the homework (Bennett-Conroy, 2012). TIPS assignment are considered easy – which means they do not require outside reference material or a high level of subject matter knowledge to complete the assigned homework (Bennett-Conroy, 2012).

Balli, Demo, and Wedman (1998), first conducted a study with a 6th grade math class splitting them into three groups. These groups including not prompting the parent to help, prompting the parent to help, and prompting the parent to help with an additional comments section and a parents signature was required. It was concluded that the group prompting the parents to help as well as signing the homework showed the most involvement. This group also had 100% submission rate. Van Voorhis (2003) conducted a similar study with 6th and 8th grade science classes, however, these students were only split into two groups: one requesting help from parents and one not. This study yielded a 74% submission rate as well as increased family involvement from the experimental group. These interactive homework assignments allow for parents to feel involved and confident in their role of their student’s education (Bennett-Conroy, 2012). When teachers create an interactive homework system, parents have more access to ongoing communication between home and school. (Van Voorhis, 2003).

In summary, there are currently many different Parent Teacher communication strategies currently being implemented. These strategies include computer-mediated communication (ex. E-mail, instant messaging, social media networks, etc.), home visits, parent-teacher conferences, personalized student notes, and parent-teacher curriculum. Each of these strategies has strengths and weaknesses. However, for students to succeed,

it is essential for parents and teachers to communicating in some form (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011, Bennett-Conroy, 2012, Hesse, Rauscher, Roberts, & Oretgea, 2004, Thompson, 2008).

Effects of Poverty

To understand how poverty can affect our students and the way we communicate with their families, we must first understand what poverty is. Payne (2013) defines poverty as, "...the extent to which an individual does without resources" (p. 7). While some may assume resources simply mean the financial aspect, there are actually many different facets. These facets include: financial, emotional, mental/cognitive, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/role models, knowledge of hidden rules, and language/formal register (Payne, 2013). Families or individuals access to resources are not constant. In fact, Payne (2013) describes resources to be on a continuum.

Families who live in poverty fall into one of two categories: generational poverty or situational poverty. Generational poverty is when a family line has been in poverty for at least two generations (Payne, 2013). Generational poverty has its own culture and the families that live in it have hidden rules and a belief system (Payne, 2013). People that live in generational poverty often have the attitude and belief that society owes them something (Payne, 2013). Situational poverty is when a family or individual does not have resources because of a traumatic event. These events include things such as death, divorce, or a natural disaster. When families suffer from situational poverty, it is mostly due to the loss of a financial resource. Families and individuals will usually have a lot of pride and be reluctant, if not in complete refusal, of accepting charity (Payne, 2013).

Carter (2014) described poverty as being complex and long reaching. Poverty can have a great deal of influence on the mental health of both children and adults (Baggerly, 2006). Teens who grow up in poverty have more behavioral and emotional problems, as well as being more apt to participate in risky sexual behavior. (Martens, Chateau, Burland, Finlayson, Smith, Taylor, Brownell, Nickel, Katz, & Botlon, 2014) Children's cognitive development is greatly impacted not only by the education offered, but also by families and home learning environment (Duncan, Ludwig, and Magnuson, 2007). Therefore, growing up in poverty can affect our student's education. Poverty does not directly impact one area of academics; it can touch all areas (Manz, 2012). These effects can start to be seen at the preschool level. If students are experiencing poverty in their developmental years the long-term educational effects can be heightened (Manz, 2012). Duncan et al. (2007) found that preschoolers learning environments contribute largely to test scores. They also found that student's socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as their race, can greatly affect their language and cognitive skills as early as one-year-old. When comparing high-income families with low-income families, there was 1.25 standard deviations between the two groups reading achievement scores with the high-income students scoring higher (Ladd, 2012).

Teachers often find it difficult to foster successful parent-teacher communication when the family has a different background and culture of their own (Meyer et al., 2011). Teachers must put in additional effort in order to prevent misunderstandings based on these differences (Ebelry et al., 2007). While creating and maintaining these relationships can be hard, it is essential that we do not allow these relationships to go unnoticed. Payne (2013) stated that knowing the resources your students are lacking is a

great way to know which interventions will work, and more specifically interventions that will not work. When teachers foster relationships with parents who are in poverty, the parents are more likely to want to be involved in their child's education (Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009).

In conclusion, poverty is complex and long reaching (Carter, 2014) and direct effects a individuals ability to obtain different assets (Payne, 2013). Research has found that students living in poverty may experience long term educational effects or delays (Manz, 2012). Additionally, when families are living in poverty, teachers often find it more trying to further a parent-teach relationship (Meyer et al., 2011).

The Model and the Community

To fully understand the community driven development (CDD) project and its possible impact, we must understand the design of the project, and the community in which the project is occurring Mansuri and Rao (2004) define CDD as "...mechanism for enhancing sustainability, improving efficiency and effectiveness, allowing poverty reduction efforts to be taken to scale, making development more inclusive, empowering poor people, building social capital, strengthening governance, and complementing market and public sector activities. Community-driven development is said to achieve all of this by reducing information problems (by eliciting development priorities directly from target communities and allowing communities to identify projects and eligible recipients of private benefits), expanding the resources available to the poor (through credit, social funds, capacity building, and occupational training), and strengthening the civic capacities of communities by nurturing organizations that represent them." (p. 2)

CDD programs believe that community members should be the main advocates and have the most control of their own development (Fang, 2006). This project believed that CDD was the best design. This design focuses on changing individuals while collaborating with families. It believes that individuals and the environment in which they live have the ability to change, learn, and grow. Fonchingong (2006) stated that while poor people may be considered powerless because of their lack of resources, they have strength when they come together as a community. They can become empowered and move forward with collective action (Fonchingong, 2006). The voice is given directly to the under resourced people within the community which allows for more programs, funds, and government assistance to be directly applied where they need it, not where outside individuals think it is needed. (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). CDD has the ability to make great progress when a community is in need and when the community truly empowers the people who are impacted. (Mansuri & Rao, 2004).

Many CDD projects have been implemented and found to be successful. One of these projects includes Jacksonville, Florida's 1,000 in 1,000. The goal of this project was to move 1,000 people out of poverty in 1,000 days. At the time of implementation (2014), 14% of Jacksonville, Florida's citizens were living in poverty. This came down to 1 out of every 6 children living under-resourced. The program believed that children could have more successful futures if their families were built on better foundations. The project focused on nine pivotal assets. These assets included quality child care, affordable housing, transportation, parenting and financial literacy skills, resolution of criminal background issues, job training, accountability, earned income tax credit, and monthly budget management. They use these assets to help move families out of poverty. Their

model focused on families who were poor, working, and struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, they worked closely with organizations working with these families to improve the overall impact.

The pilot program, Jackson 1,000 in 1,000, enlisted 100 families. Statistics on the families involved included: 84% of the families were from a single head of household, the average children per family was 2.67, 93.3% of the adults had obtained a high school diploma or GED, and 95.6% of the families were working and paying taxes. The program started with 23 assets. This is where the Nine Pivotal Assets emerged. The results showed that if a family was wishing to be successful they needed to obtain seven of the nine pivotal assets and increase their income at least 15% over the poverty level. Based on these results, they will continue to implement this program with more families in hopes of each family being successful.

The World Bank is another example of a successful CDD project, however, these projects are based internationally. The World Bank believes in increasing the participation of decision and developing the resources needed for communities and governments to thrive. The World Banks most noticeable works are in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

The projects based out of Indonesia is one of the largest CDD projects. The main goal of this project is to lessen poverty and increase economic opportunities. This is achieved through strengthening the local government, community, and public infrastructure. This project has reached 12,000 villagers.

The project in the Philippines gives money directly to the villagers in order to increase the communities' standard of living. The people in the village decided on the

changes they would like to be made within their community. Then the villagers are technically trained in order to complete the project. These trainings include project planning, technical design, and financial management. This project covers 42 of the poorest areas and has reached 1.9 million households in these areas.

The CDD program local in Northern Mountain region of Vietnam focuses greatly on support the government that is currently in place and investing the village infrastructure. This program is located in the poorest area of Vietnam. This program has spent most of its investment in creating schools, accessible drink water, and roads and then training individuals to be teachers, agriculture specialist, etc. This project has brought water to 32,200 households (85% of the targeted area), given basic health care to 353,871 household, and many more positive results for this community. Because of how the World Bank has interacted and educated the population of the specific areas, these countries have been able to be more successful in meeting the needs of their citizens. The CDD project this study is researching is based out of an economically depressed zone in a metropolitan city in the Midwest. This zone was identified in May of 2015. The area consists of nine neighborhoods in the oldest part of the metropolitan city. This area was identified to be at risk after an increase in crime, illness, and poverty, as well as a decrease in food and play spaces for children. According to the United States Census Bureau results, the metropolitan area is estimated to have around 166,000 people. The median household income is approximately \$32,000. The area is reported to have 26.4% of its population living below the Federal Poverty Line. The school district in the area are currently serves around 25,000 students. Of those students, 54.43% are a part of the Free and Reduced lunch program. This is a 10% increase since the year of 2009.

This CDD project looks to develop families while supporting the development and sustainability of the neighborhood and community in which it is located. This CDD project was directly modeled after the Jacksonville 1000 in 1000, with access to one additional asset. The CDD project provides each participant with the opportunity to access ten assets including: quality childcare, affordable housing, transportation, parenting and financial literacy skills, resolution of criminal background issues, job training, accountability, use of earned income tax credit, monthly budget management, and affordable healthcare. This program determined that access to healthcare, both physical and mental, that accepts state and federally subsidized insurance program was necessary for participants. Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that people are motivated to fulfill our lower-level needs before we fulfill our higher-level needs (Harrigan and Commons, 2015). The advancement of needs is as follows: 1) Physiological Needs, 2) Safety, 3) Belonging, 4) Love/Esteem, and 5) Self-Actualization Needs (Harrigan and Commons, 2015). The CDD project looks to fulfill needs starting with the lower level and moving to the highest level.

When parents are involved in their student's education, students are more likely to have fewer behavioral problems obtain higher achievement (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011, Thompson, 2008) and (Hesse, Rauscher, Roberts, & Oretgea, 2004). Because of this, a great push has been put on educators to get parents more involved in their child's education (Thompson, 2008). This has led to many different strategies being used including: computer-mediated communication (ex. E-mail, instant messaging, social media networks, etc.), home visits, parent-teacher conferences, personalized student notes, and parent-teacher curriculum. However, any different life factors can affect the

way parents and teachers communication. One of these life factors is when families are living in poverty (Meyer et al., 2011). Programs such as community driven development projects (CDD) have been created to attempt at bridging the gap of individuals living in poverty. CDD projects allow for community members who are living in poverty to become the main advocates of bridging this gap (Fang, 2006). When we study the way individuals in the CDD project communicate with the individuals participating, we can make a direct connection to how teachers should be communicating with these individuals.

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in its purest sense. Jansen (2015), claims that qualitative research is used to generate and retell stories. Qualitative research can draw on demographic data, use coding systems as well as other quantification to analyze the results of the study (Jackson, 2015). Qualitative research allows for data to be collected in the participant's natural setting, which allows for face to face, personal interactions (Creswell, 2009). This maintains the attention of the research to remain on the participant's point of view (Creswell, 2009).

An *a priori* emerging coding system was used to analyze the research conducted in this study. An *a priori* emerging coding system requires that the researcher organize data under preset themes (Themes and Codes, 2016). Two themes were set before data were collected and analyzed. These themes include opportunities for communication between staff and participants and barriers disrupting communication between staff and participants. Based off of the themes that emerged from these findings, assumptions can be made about the communication currently be used within this specific community driven development project.

Participants

The participants of this study included individuals who are participating in and individual who are working for a community driven development project. The current model in which participants are engaging is modeled after the nine assets of the Jacksonville 1,000 in 1,000 project. This CDD projects adds an additional tenth asset,

access to healthcare. This study took place in an economically depressed zone in a metropolitan city in the Midwest. To be eligible to participate in the CDD project certain criteria must be met. The adult participants must meet requirements such as being a part of a “family”, a caregiver within the family is currently employed in a job with no job safety, have a high school diploma/GED certificate or be GED eligible, have continuous and a reliable living situation, and have the capacity and drive for change. If a family is interested in participating in this CDD project, they must complete an intake form, as well as additional assessments. These assessments tell CDD project leaders the families current level of assets, background information that could affect their experience, and their capacity for change. It should be noted that “family” in this circumstance is defined as a caregiver and a child; a nuclear family is not required.

Participants of the CDD project were invited to participate in this study. The CDD participants were asked to complete one, hour long focus group with other participants in the program. Focus group were conducted with three cohorts within this CDD project. Each time the CDD project recruit’s families, they will take a maximum of 20 adults. Therefore, this study had the opportunity for a possible of 60 participants between the three focus groups. The cohorts ranged in their experience within the CDD project. The first cohort had completed the project programming and was still receiving services. The second cohort and third cohort were just starting the CDD project programming. During these focus groups, five questions to stimulate conversation were used. Participants were encouraged to answer the questions openly.

Participants in this study also included seven staff members that are working directly with the adults within the CDD program. The staff included a variety of

individuals with a diverse range of titles including graduate assistants all the way to program directors. Staff were asked to participate in a single, hour long interview and to answer the questions honestly.

Before participating in a focus group or one-on-one interview, participants were presented with an informed consent (AA and AB). Special care was taken with the CDD participation to ensure they full understood the purpose and what was being asked of them within the project. The CDD participants were given a copy of the informed consent one week prior to the completion of the study. CDD participants were encouraged to ask questions to both the Principal Investigator of this study and the Program Director of the CDD project. Informed consent was given via a paper copy before any questions were presented. The informed consent document made the participants aware that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. It also stated that any information shared within a focus group or interview would not be shared with staff of the CDD project and would not be held against them in anyway. Prior approval for this project was granted from Missouri State Univerity IRB (11/14/16; FY2017-63).

Data Collection

Data were collected from cohorts in the CDD project who have completed programming or are currently in the process of completing the programming. These individuals represent one or more neighborhoods in a zone that is described as economically depressed. Data were collected through three outlets: (a) focus groups with representatives from participating families within the CDD project, (b) direct interviews

with structured questions to staff of the CDD project, and (c) gleaning key pieces of information from demographic studies created specifically for this project.

The focus groups occurred during a regular weekly program that participants attend. Participants were given the informed consent at least a week before the focus group took place. The participants were encouraged to ask question and seek clarification from CDD project staff, as well as the researchers of this study. Participants were informed they did not have to participate and they could refuse with no repercussions. The five questions asked during these focus groups can be found in AC. All focus groups were audio recorded to keep record of data. According to Bench, Day, and Griffiths (2011), “Focus groups are group interviews on a specific topic that seek to generate qualitative data by capitalizing on group interaction” (p. 444). The participants within a focus group generally have similar characteristics or a shared experience (Amos, 2002). The uniqueness of a focus group is that it gives participants the opportunity to deliberate certain topics and change their opinion based on the influence of others in the group (Bench et al., 2011).

In addition to the aforementioned focus groups, one-on-one interviews were conducted with seven staff members currently working with adults within this CDD project. The 13 structured questions asked to the staff members can be found in AD. All interviews were audio recorded and each audio recording was transcribed. Interviews are considered to be a private interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee where questions, sometimes personal or sensitive, can be asked and answered. (Jepson, Abbott, and Hastie, 2015). Interviews allow for a participant’s perspective on a specific topic to be heard in a welcoming and safe environment (Jansen, 2015).

Lastly, data from previously published reports on this CDD project were used. These reports allowed for demographic information about cohorts to be shared without providing personally identifiable information about CDD project participants. From these reports, information such as cohort attitude and success or lack thereof can be taken into consideration.

Data Analysis

Focus groups and interview audiotapes collected were transcribed by the researcher. From there, the different statements made by the study participants were sorted into the two preset categories: opportunities and barriers. The different statements were then analyzed to find the common themes among the participants. Quantitative numbers can be associated once themes are developed to see how often a theme was discussed. Each participant or group of participants will be analyzed on the basis or level of where they are with their assets and how this could affect the perception of communication. This information will be taken from observation or data collected during a focus group, as well as information gleaned from previous project reports.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the various communication strategies used within a CDD project. Within this chapter is the data that were collected from the three different outlets: (a) focus groups with representatives from participating families within the CDD project, (b) direct interviews with structured questions to staff of the CDD project, and (c) collecting information from demographic studies created specifically for this project. First examined will be the three focus groups, held between December of 2016 and February of 2017, with the representatives from the participating families in the CDD project.

Focus Group Demographics

Focus Group One (FG1) was held on a Thursday evening in December of 2016 during the CDD projects regular meeting time in the routine meeting room. The focus group lasted approximately thirty minutes. There were fifteen CDD project participants present at the meeting. The participants were given the consent form a week prior to the study taking place to give them an ample amount of time to read the consent form and ask questions, if needed. All fifteen CDD project participants agreed to participate in this study and signed a consent form. Of the fifteen participants, nine of them actively participated within the focus group. Participants were considered to be active if they respond to one or more of the questions presented. The participants in this focus group had been involved in the CDD project for a full sixteen weeks. On this night, after their regular programming, they would be graduating from the CDD project. The focus group

started with the five preset questions presented in Appendix C. Based off of responses, additional questions were asked. Some of these questions included, “How many were hoping to see something better happen in terms of where you are living?” and “Is it easier to come to one place? A one stop shop?” A full list of the expanded set of questions is in AE.

Focus Group Two (FG2) was held on a Thursday evening in January of 2017 during the CDD projects regular meeting time in the routine meeting room. This location and time was the same as FG1. This focus group lasted about twenty minutes. There were ten CDD project participants present at the meeting. This was the first routine meeting for this group of participants. Because of this, they were not able to be given the informed consent a week in advanced. To ensure the participants had a full understanding of the consent form and project, they were given additional time for explanation and questions. Of the ten participants, seven of them actively participated in the focus group. Participants were considered to be active if they respond to one or more of the questions presented. The focus group started with the five preset questions presented in Appendix C. Based off of responses, additional questions were asked. Some of these questions included, “What kind of goals do you have?” and “Do you use any kind of email communication?” A full list of the expanded set of questions is in AF.

Focus Group Three (FG3) was held on a Tuesday evening in February of 2017 during the CDD projects regular meeting time in the routine meeting room. The location of this group is within a different neighborhood than FG1 and FG2. This neighborhood and group of participants is focal point is a school, meaning all families and participants will be recruited through the neighborhood school. There were nine CDD project

participants present at this meeting. This was the first routine meeting for this group of participants. Because of this, they were not able to be given the informed consent a week in advanced. To ensure the participants had a full understanding of the consent form and project, they were given additional time for explanation and questions. Of the nine participants, five of them actively participated in the focus group. Participants were considered to be active if they respond to one or more of the questions presented. The focus group started with the five preset questions presented in AC. Based off of responses, additional questions were asked. Some of these questions included, “How do we help people get to the next step?” and “How did you find out about this project?” A full list of the expanded set of questions is in AG.

This CDD project focuses on participants gaining access and becoming stable in ten different assets. These assets include: quality childcare, affordable housing, transportation, parenting and financial literacy skills, resolution of criminal background issues, job training, accountability, use of earned income tax credit, monthly budget management, and affordable healthcare. The transcripts of the focus groups were reviewed to see if any of the participants initiated a desire for change specific to these ten assets. T1 depicts the results that were found. An “X” was put into the column if the asset was brought up during the focus group as a desire to initiate change to these specific aspirational assets. This was not based on frequency, simply if the asset was brought up. Assets that were present across all three focus groups as a desire for change included: quality of childcare, transportation, and monthly budget management. Assets that were present across two of the three focus groups as a desire for change included: Affordable Housing, Accountability, and Affordable Healthcare. Assets that were not present across

any of the three focus groups as a desire for change included: Resolution of Criminal Background Issues and Use of Earned Income Tax Credit.

Table 1. Focus Group – Presence of Change of Aspirational Assets
Presence of want for change of aspirational assets across FG1, FG2, and FG3 of the CDD project.

<u>Assets for Change</u>	<u>FG1</u>	<u>FG2</u>	<u>FG3</u>
Quality Childcare	X	X	X
Affordable Housing	X		X
Transportation	X	X	X
Parenting & Financial Literacy Skills		X	
Resolution of Criminal Background Issues			
Job Training		X	
Accountability	X	X	
Use of Earned Income Tax Credit			
Monthly Budget Management	X	X	X
Affordable Healthcare	X		X

Opportunities to Enhance Communication – Focus Groups

An a priori emerging coding system was used to analyze the research conducted in this study. An a priori emerging coding system requires that the researcher organize data under preset themes (Themes and Codes, 2016). Two themes were set before data were collected and analyzed. These themes include opportunities for communication between staff and participants and barriers disrupting communication between staff and participants. Based off the themes that emerged from these findings, assumptions were

made about the communication currently being used within this specific community driven development project.

When the data were analyzed from the three focus groups, six themes emerged within the opportunities to enhance communication. To be considered a theme, more than one participant during a focus group must have articulated a positive remark towards the theme. These themes included: self-improvement, fiscal advancement, sense of community, childcare available, proximity of resources, and developing personal relationships. T2 shows which focus groups brought up each of these themes. Following are the definitions of themes found in this study:

Self-Improvement - Any idea or comment that worked toward the participant improving their personal life. This included things such as achieving goals or attaining education in different areas including parenting or job skills.

Fiscal Advancement - Incorporates improving their financial situation or attaining more knowledge in the banking system.

Sense of Community - Participants feeling like they are not alone, but are working with others to improve their life.

Childcare Available - A reliable person and place for children to be taken care of while they are communicating and working towards goals.

Proximity of Resource - How close the resource is to the participants housing or community.

Developing Personal Relationships - Having a personal relationship with those they are trying to communicate with.

Table 2. *Focus Group – Opportunities to Enhance Communication*
 Opportunities to enhance communication themes. Present during a focus group if one participant discussed this as being an opportunity to enhance communication.

<u>Opportunities to Enhance Communication</u>	<u>FG1</u>	<u>FG2</u>	<u>FG3</u>
Self-Improvement	X	X	X
Proximity of Resource	X	X	X
Fiscal Advancement	X	X	
Developing Personal Relationship	X	X	
Sense of Community	X		
Available Childcare		X	

Of all six themes, only two of the themes were considered dominate. A theme was dominate if it was brought up across all three focus groups. One theme was self-improvement. Five out of nine participants in FG1, four out of seven participants in FG2, and two out of five participants in FG3 made at least one direct comment to improving their life. These comments covered a wide variety of topics. FG1P2 commented about the opportunity to learn more on parenting skills stating, “...without that class I don’t think I would know what to do or how to react. So I appreciate the opportunity to come to the parenting class because now I feel more comfortable and safe with my baby.” Other participants focus was more centered around improving their job skills to grow a career or business. FG2P1 states, “...in my situation it’s figuring out how to even run a business or whatever. I need help achieving those goals and I get that here.” Others were interested in proving other individuals wrong. When asked to expand on specific goals, FG2P9 declared, “Mine would be to prove my biological father wrong.” From the information

gathered from all three focus groups, it is concluded that participants felt they had a better opportunity to communicate when both parties were working toward and being supported to improve one's self.

The other dominate theme was proximity of resource. Four out of nine participants in FG1, seven out of seven participants in FG2, and five out of five participants in FG3 made at least on direct comment to how close the resources were to their home or community. The CDD project is located within all of the focus groups neighborhoods. All resources that the participants may need are brought to the facility. FG2 participants all stated that they learned about the program and the resources they had to offer at their neighborhood school. FG3 participants were all recruited through their neighborhood school to participate in the program. When asked if they believe the close proximity of the resources had an impact of on their participation in the program, many participants agreed that it improved their ability to participate and communicate. When asked how their participation and communication was directly influenced by the proximity, FG1P3 stated, "...it helps build momentum." FG3P4 commented on how the proximity even had the ability to directly impact communication among others in the neighborhood. The participant's states, "We [neighborhood association] put out a newsletter to the folks in the neighborhood and we actually walk those so we can maybe talk to those people." This information determines that the proximity had a direct positive impact on those involved within this project.

Two of the six themes were developed across two of the focus groups. These themes were less dominate. These themes included fiscal advancement and developing personal relationships. Fiscal advancement was present in FG1 and FG2. Six out of nine

participants in FG1 and five out of seven participants in FG2 made at least one direct comment to wanting to become financially stable, learn more about money management, and/or enter back into or start new with the banking system. Participants stated they were more likely to join or continue with programming if they had help in fiscal advancement. FG1P3 commented they wanted to have financial independence. When asked to expand on what that looked like for their family, the participant stated, “I have money left when I get to the end of the month.” FG2P4 stated, “...we’ve been [through] a couple of rough times and it’s like that one little thing knocks you down and it’s so hard to get back on top again. So, try to figure out how to better combat that.”

Developing personal relationships was also present in both FG1 and FG2. Five out of nine participants in FG1 and four out of seven participants in FG2 made at least one direct comment to preferring to build a one on one personal relationship with the staff at the CDD project. Of the participants that commented, all stated they preferred one on one personal communication to assist in building a relationship. Once that relationship was built, they felt more comfortable participating and communicating with the staff. FG2P7 stated, “...it’s just been about them getting to know me and it just kind of escalates from there in conversation. It’s a personal relationship. Not just like, “You’re next in line. What do you need?” FG1P1 had a similar comment saying, “They actually listen to our needs and offer a solution. They don’t just pass us off and give a run around like other agencies. You don’t get on a permanent wait list. Here everyone pulls together and there is a solution readily available now. Not six weeks down the road.”

The final two themes were present in only one of the focus groups. Although these last themes were only present within one focus group, the themes were echoed by

two to three participants each and thus, were considered emerging themes.. The first theme, sense of community, was found in FG1. Participants unanimously agreed that they were more likely to participate and be open to communication because of the sense of community they felt was present. Participants made comments about not feeling alone. FG1P1 stated, “You’re not facing it alone; you’re a team.” When asked if having a support system across all areas made participation easier, all participants agreed. FG1P4 added on to this by saying, “We were all basically hitting a brick wall in our life and now we’ve learned how to work together and tear the wall down.”

The last theme was available childcare which was present in FG2. Three out of seven participants made at least one direct comment stating they were willing to participate if they had access to safe and reliable childcare. When asked in what ways the CDD project was currently helping and providing them with this resource, FG2P4 stated they enjoyed this program so much because there was always a, “...safe place for the kiddos to hang out while we’re doing this [CDD programming].”

Barriers Preventing Communication – Focus Groups

When the data were analyzed from the three focus groups, three themes emerged within the barriers preventing communication. To be considered a theme, more than one participant during a focus group must have made a direct comment to the theme. These themes included: transportation, interest of the internet, and accessibility. T3 shows which focus groups spoke to which themes. Following are the definitions of themes found in this study:

Transportation - Access to reliable and consistent transportation; either personal or public.

Interest of Internet - Have a want or desire to use the internet and communication forms that come with it including email or Facebook.

Accessibility - Access to all parts of the neighborhood no matter physical capabilities.

Table 3. *Focus Group – Barriers Preventing Communication*

Barriers preventing communication themes. Present during a focus group if one participant discussed this as being a barrier preventing communication.

Barriers Preventing Communication	FG1	FG2	FG3
Interest of Internet	X	X	X
Transportation	X		X
Accessibility			X

Of the three themes that emerged under the barriers preventing communication, one theme was dominate. Interest of Internet was a theme that appeared across all three focus groups. Three of nine participants in FG1, seven of seven participants in FG2, and one of five participants in FG3 made at least one direct comment stating that internet and their lack of interest in using it was a barrier to communicating and participating in the CDD project. FG1P1 observed that there was an age difference between the older and younger generations within the project. The participant stated, “It kind of depends on the group of people because it kind of seems like older people don’t have internet and they don’t want to learn how to use it.” While using internet to communicate with others may be an option, some participants may not be as open. This idea was solidified during FG2 when FG2P2 said, “I don’t have email or Facebook and I don’t want it.” This idea was continued when FG3P2 stated, “Every six months I might get on my email and see what’s

going on. I'm not a modern day person...I think for the younger generation it's pretty cool. But for the older generation like myself, email is not the way to go."

One of the three themes that emerged under barriers preventing communication was transportation. This theme was present during two of the three focus groups. These focus groups were FG1 and FG3. Three of nine participants in FG1 and one of the five participants in FG3 made at least one direct comment stating that access to reliable and consistent transportation, whether personal or public, was a barrier preventing communication. Participants that require public transportation often find it is not reliable or consistent. FG1P7 commented on city transportation saying, "...you can't always count on the city bus. And the city bus don't always take you where you need to go..." FG3P2 also discussed how participants needed more dependable and safe public transportation for children to support guardians who cannot provide it themselves.

The last theme was only present during one focus group. This theme was accessibility and it was present during FG3. Two of five participants made one or more direct comments stating that the neighborhood was not always accessible for individuals with physical disabilities. FG3P1 stated, "I am handicap and I use a power wheelchair most of the time and this neighborhood, there's a lot of people that block the public sidewalk. You have to go around and get out in the street or one time I even turned over and hurt myself." FG3P2 made a similar remark. However, this participant made a direct link to another barrier, transportation. The participant stated, "It's kind of difficult for me cause I also take care of my sister who is bed bound. ...bringing her back and forth to school, I can't say it's a hassle but I would like to say, 'Hey, get on the bus, goodbye.'"

To conclude the opportunities, across all focus groups participants felt more willing to participate and facilitate communication when they felt both parties were invested in improving one's self and the resources were near. Two of three focus groups felt more willing to participate when fiscal advancement was a priority and staff was interested in facilitating a personal relationship. The last two themes were found in one focus group. These included participants being more willing when they felt they had a support system and they had reliable and safe childcare. Barriers across all focus groups include participants wanting or having an interest in utilizing the internet. Two of the three focus groups felt as though reliable and consistent public and private transportation was a barrier. Lastly, one focus group believed accessibility of the neighborhood was a participation barrier.

Staff Interview Demographics

The interviews with staff took place on a day, time, and place of the staffs choosing. Altogether there were seven different staff members that were interviewed one-on-one with the thirteen structured questions. T4 shows the break down of the information about the staff. The table includes the coding for the staff used within this project, their title, a brief description of their role, and how much interaction the staff had with participants. Staff coding will not be included in the narratives to secure the staff participants anonymity.

Table 4. Staff Member Titles and Descriptions

<u>Staff Members Title</u>	<u>Description of Role</u>	<u>Interaction with Participants</u>
Associated University Graduate Assistant	Assist with the programming, coordinate volunteers within the program, and assist with data collection	Twice a week
Associated University Graduate Assistant	Case manager for participants, help with ten assets	Once a week
Program Director	Manage and facilitate all staff and participants currently within the program	Three times a week
Program Manager	Recruit and process intake forms, lead programming for participants, assist case management as necessary	Three times a week
Financial Advisor	Advise participants in the financial and banking world	Once a month
Case Management Director	Supervisor case managers, help identify goals, identify resources to assist families	Once a week
Neighborhood Site School Principal	Identify and recruit families to join the project	Once a week

Opportunities to Enhance Communication – Staff Interviews

When the data were analyzed from the seven interviews, five themes emerged within the opportunities to enhance communication. To be considered a theme, two or more staff members had to comment about the theme. These themes included: instilled

sense of self-improvement, frequent attempts to communicate, sense of community, developing personal relationships, and effective support techniques. Following are the definitions of themes found in this study:

Instilled Sense of Self-Improvement - Empowering participants to know their capabilities, make goals, and reach them.

Frequent Attempt to Communicate - Attempting to communicate with participant's multiple times a week in different formats.

Sense of Community – Participants feeling like they are not alone, but are working with others to improve their life.

Developing Personal Relationships – Having a personal relationship with those they are trying to communicate with.

Effective Support Techniques - Implementing strategies and techniques to make participants successful and independent.

The dominate theme among the seven staff interviews were developing personal relationships. A theme was considered dominate if it was found in four to five of the interviews. Of the seven interviewed, five staff members noted that this was an opportunity for the participants to communicate and participate within the program. This was also considered to be an opportunity from the participants point of view. A staff member stated that the entire program was based solely around the participants needs based on interactions with them, not what CDD staff assumed participants needed. The intention of the program was to meet the participants needs, creating more involvement. The staff was able to do this through creating personal relationships. A staff member stated, “We really just started talking to the families that were in need to determine what

type of programming or community or resources or trust or concerns they had...[we] learned what the issues were for the neighbors.” The staff member also stated, “...we have to go to the root of why they have that need, and it’s [personal relationships] the only way to do that.” A staff member also believed that to create these relationships, “You gotta get your hands dirty and just go talk to people.”

Frequent attempts to communicate was also a dominate theme that was present among four of the seven staff interviews. Four of the seven staff members believed that participants were given many attempts of communication in different forms throughout the week. These different forms of communication include follow up, face to face communication, phone calls, etc. A staff member stated that their job required meeting weekly to biweekly with families, based on where they were with goals and programming. A staff member spoke briefly about the weekly phone calls that are made saying, “We call everyone in the neighborhood every week. Every number that we have that they want us to call, we will call and remind them what programing, what we are having for dinner, just to check up. A quick phone call.” These different attempts to communicate have the ability to foster relationships and enhance opportunities for communication and participation among participants.

Three themes were found among three out of the seven staff interviews. These were considered to be less dominate themes. These themes include instilled sense of self-improvement, sense of community, and effective support techniques. A staff member stated, “You give someone the seed and the power of belief and it’s amazing to see what happens and begins to grow and flourish when they are given an environment.” The staff members believe that the participants can set goals and achieve them. By creating this

type of environment, participants often feel better about themselves and their situation, making it easier to reach goals. A staff member noted a change in the participant's level of confidence. This staff member said, "There's this sense of I'm worth something and I can do something...I think the number one word that comes out to me is confidence. You see it kind of grow in them."

Sense of community emerged from interviews. The CDD project requires participants and staff to come together for programming at least once a week, if not more. These three staff members commented on how this set up creates a sense of community for the participants involved. A staff member stated, "The sense of community it gives people, like the belonging and involvement, I think gets people to buy in and keep coming. Kind of like owning your neighborhood and owning your community. Feeling like your apart of a bigger change." Staff members even commented that participants become more dependent of each other as opposed to staff members. A staff member stated, "When we return to community, we remove that isolation and the idea that if a piece of my stability factors fall, I have a neighbor to call. If something happens and I have a sick kid and it's between me getting to my job or losing it, I've got a community around me where's there is someone who is in walking distance or maybe even down the street that can help me out for an hour or two."

The last theme that emerged as an opportunity to enhance communication was effective support techniques. Staff members of the project believe they are providing participants with effective support techniques that allow them to identify and solve problems on their own. These support techniques can be a wide range of things. A staff member stated that as a case manager, a common support technique is breaking down

tasks into manageable pieces so participants can complete it on their own. This staff member says, “You don’t want to do it for them. You have to help them but not enable them.” When participants are given tasks that are manageable with support as needed, they are found to be more successful. A staff member comments that, “...they know we’re not holding them accountable to 100% success from the beginning. We explain, you’re going to fail. You’re going to fail miserably multiple times. There is no magic wand.” When participants know that failure is acceptable, they are more willing to participate and continue their involvement in the project.

Barriers Preventing Communication – Staff Interviews

When the data were analyzed from the seven interviews, five themes emerged within the barriers preventing communication. To be considered a theme, two or more staff participants had to comment about to the theme. These themes included: past experiences, educational attainment, transportation, trust, and committing to the process.

Following are the definitions of themes found in this study:

Past Experiences - The participants past experiences with communication, resources, etc. having a direct impact on their experience now.

Educational Attainment - The amount of education the participant has obtained.

Transportation – Access to reliable and consistent transportation; either personal or public.

Trust – How easy or resistant someone is to place their trust in other people.

Committing to the Process - How much the participants commit to the project.

Four of the themes were dominate and appeared in four of the seven interviews. These themes included past experiences, educational attainment, transportation, and trust. These staff members commented that they felt, in one way or another, that participants past experiences hindered their ability to fully participate and communicate within the project. A staff member specifically commented on participants having unpleasant communication experiences in the past. This staff member said, “I think that a difficult past with communication can make it [their participation] difficult.... [the participants think] I have no way to pay that bill. I have no way to emotionally handle a bill collector calling me right now. I’m going to ignore, ignore, ignore. That default reaction that they have had for years is very difficult to break down.” A staff member also stated that, “I think a lot of them have been overwhelmed by their circumstance and when you’re behind and getting knocked down all the time, it’s hard to get up. It’s hard to get back to where you can get a rationale vision of what you need to do. It becomes pretty emotional...”

Educational attainment was also present among four of the seven interviews. Staff members believe that participants level of education they had obtained can impede the opportunities they have within the project. A staff member commented that, “Middle class has a much larger vocabulary then someone of lower class. There’s the discomfort of, ‘I don’t even speak like you so in your environment I feel uncomfortable.’” Because most of the staff members would be considered middle class or higher, these situations can become prevalent at the project site. Staff members also stated that educational attainment doesn’t just contain level of education received, but also experiences the participants have been exposed to. This staff member went on to comment that,

“Educational attainment is one of the biggest ones [barriers]. To where, not even just did they graduate high school, but all of the experiences that go into, or don’t go into someone’s socioeconomic status...Experiences aren’t there.”

The theme transportation was also a dominate theme. Transportation, specifically public transportation, was considered to be a barrier for the participants to commit to the project. A staff member stated that, “Transportation can be an issue for people.” This staff member went on to explain that is part of the reason the project tries to make everything within walking distance for the participants. A staff member went on to explain how often barriers of transportation can create a domino effect of other problems. This staff member stated, “...it just ties into just one big bad situation. Negative health prevents someone from walking to the bus stop, which is gonna permit them from using the transit center.”

Finally, the last dominate theme was trust. These staff members agreed that participants often had difficulty trusting new people. These trust issues originated from a variety of past experiences or ideas. A staff member describes the situation by saying, “It’s almost like an emotional shut down...It’s easier to expect the worst and live in the worst because when you get your hopes up, it can all come crashing down.” A staff member spoke to how important it was to establish a relationship in which the participants trust. A staff member articulated that, “...it’s trust and developing that trust. They are families in poverty and so most families are having bill collectors contacting them so often times they won’t answer their phone...we have to establish that trust that they know who we were and then once we were able to do that, the contact was much easier. If we had to leave a message, they called us right back or they texted or answered

when we called.” All of the staff members agreed that it is the staff member’s responsibility to develop the relationship of trust with the participants.

The last theme that emerged was committing to the process. This theme was in two of the seven interviews. Staff members stated that they often don’t find the participants fully invested in the program. Both of the staff members mentioned that the program was voluntary. A staff member stated, “...sometimes they just have fear of change so that can hinder communication because, you know, it’s voluntary program so if they want to dodge your call, they can dodge you.” A staff member also stated that, “We can only present how to change. It’s up to them to change.”

To conclude, most of the staff members view an opportunity to enhance communication by creating a personal relationship with the participants. Four of the seven staff members agree that frequent attempts to communicate allow for the participants to have more opportunity to be involved. Three of the seven staff members found that an instilled sense of self-improvement, sense of community, and effective support techniques also foster opportunities for the participants to be involved. Barriers that were found across four of the seven staff interviews include educational attainment across many disciplines, reliable and consistent public and private transportation, and trusting staff members impeded participants from being involved. The last theme that emerged was found across two of the seven interviews. This theme was committing to the process of project and being open to change.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the various communication strategies used within a community driven development project. This took place in an economically depressed zone in a metropolitan city in the Midwest. This study was associated with a \$1.3 million project to assist under resourced families and the various communication strategies employed, which take into account the human condition. Three research questions were developed to address the focus of this study, they are as followed: 1) To what extent do staff in the community driven development project perceive specific strategies for communication and participation with the home to be effective in facilitating greater participation in the project and progress to identified goals?; 2) To what extent do identified families for inclusion in the community driven development project perceive specific strategies for communication and participation with the home to be effective in facilitating greater participation in the project and progress to identified goals?; and 3) In what ways do the approaches utilized by project staff for the community driven development project have application for enhancing better home/school communication for school age students, which represent various forms of economic, cultural, ethnic, racial, and disability differences? The discussion related to the findings of the three research questions are below.

Research Question One

Research question one inquires, to what extent do staff in the community driven development project perceive specific strategies for communication and participation

with the home to be effective in facilitating greater participation in the project and progress to identified goals? The findings from compilation of the qualitative data collected when posing these questions to staff in an interview setting show that staff believed there were five opportunities to facilitate effective communication between themselves and the participants of the project.

The first communication strategy is actively working to instill a sense of self-improvement. One example of employing this strategy is the staff assisting the participants in setting goals they know they can achieve and supporting them in the process of achieving them. The second communication strategy is frequent attempts to communicate. This attempted communication can be face to face, email, texting, and even Facebook messaging. The third communication strategy is possession of a sense of community. When a participant felt they belonged in the community, it affected their communicative receptiveness by feeling more willing to participate. The fourth communication strategy is developing personal relationships. These relationships between and among participants, and between staff and participants facilitate communication by making both parties feel as though they have a sound understanding of the other persons wants and needs. The final communication strategy is conscious development of an effective support techniques. Staff members agreed it was important to support participants as much as possible, without enabling. The staff ultimately wanted participants to be able to reach goals independently with CDD programming help.

The findings from compilation of the qualitative data collected when posing these questions to staff in an interview setting show that staff believed there were also five barriers preventing effective communication between themselves and the members

of the project. The first barrier preventing communication was participants past experiences. Examples of past experiences include an unpleasant experience with agencies or individuals that would allow for them to easily reach their goals. The second barrier preventing communication was educational attainment. The participants direct level of education, as well as life experiences, influences their vocabulary. When participants do not feel as if their vocabulary is as high as another parties, they are less likely to continue communication. The third barrier preventing communication was transportation. Staff members did not feel as though participants had reliable public or personal transportation. The fourth barrier preventing communication was trust. Staff members concluded that participants often took longer to trust them. This directly led into the last barrier that was present, committing to the process. Because of the participants hesitancy to trust, the staff felt they were less likely to commit to the process involved in the CDD project. The last barrier preventing communication was committing to the process. If the participants did not fully believe in the programming, the staff members believe they were less likely to fully participate and communicate.

Research Question Two

Research questions two asks a similar question as research question one except from the perspective of the participants. The research questions ask, to what extent do identified families for inclusion in the community driven development project perceive specific strategies for communication and participation with the home to be effective in facilitating greater participation in the project and progress to identified goals? The findings from compilation of the qualitative data collected when positing these questions

to participants in a focus group setting show that staff believed there were six opportunities to facilitate effective communication between themselves and the staff of the project.

The first opportunity for communication was self-improvement. Participants noticed the staffs attempts at improving their lives. They were more willing to participate when they felt as though their lives are improving. A similar strategy was identified during staff interviews. The second opportunity for communication was fiscal advancement. When participants felt more financial stable, their ability to communicate more effectively increased. The third communication strategy is conscious development of a sense of community. Because participants were in such proximity to the CDD project, they felt more like a community and more comfortable participating. A similar strategy was identified during staff interviews. The fourth communication strategy was availability of childcare. During all required meetings for CDD project, childcare is always provided, thus allowing the participants to know where their children are and feel more at ease during communication. The fifth communication strategy was proximity of resources. Participants did not have to go far for any kind of resource or communication. The last communication strategy identified was developing personal relationships. The relationships between and among participants, and between staff and participants facilitate communication by making both parties feel as though they have a sound understanding of the other partners wants and needs. A similar strategy was identified during staff interviews.

The participants of the CDD project believed that there were three barriers preventing successful communication between the staff and participants. The first

identified barrier preventing communication was transportation. Participants did not feel as though they had reliable public or personal transportation. A similar barrier was identified during staff interviews. The second identified barrier preventing communication was interest of the internet. Some identified forms of communication occurred over the internet. Participants believed that individuals who did not have an interest in using the internet were less likely to communicate consistently and effectively. The last identified barrier preventing communication was accessibility. Participants identified that the community neighborhood sidewalks were not always accessible for participants with physical disabilities making some forms of communication more difficult.

Comparing Research Questions One and Two

The staff and participants both viewed self-improvement, developing personal relationships, and sense of community as opportunities for which they can communicate at their best. Staff members believed they provided opportunities for participants to improve their life. At the same time, the participant's felt that if they were involved in these opportunities to better their life, they were more willing to communicate openly with the staff members. Both staff and participants agreed that communication was most effective when both parties had a concrete understanding of how the other functions personally. Staff and participants also came to a similar consensus that the sense of community the project provided, made it easier for them to want to communicate more openly.

When addressing barriers, both staff and participants agreed that the reliability of public or personal transportation served as a barrier for the staff and participants to communicate effectively. It should be noted that staff identified almost twice as many barriers to communication compared to the identified barriers of the participants. The researcher believed this could be possible because the staff members do not live their everyday lives like the participants do. While something may seem negative from an outsider's perspective, this may not appear to be a barrier from someone who experiences these things every day. When asked to identify the barriers of communication, staff had little to no trouble recognizing multiple barriers. However, participants often needed more time to reflect and think about the barriers that could be preventing them from communicating before they felt comfortable giving an answer.

Research Question Three

Research question three examines the connection that can be made between home and school. The questions ask, in what ways do the approaches utilized by project staff for the community driven development project have application for enhancing better home/school communication for school age students, which represent various forms of economic, cultural, ethnic, racial, and disability differences? When considering home to school communication, teachers should attempt to create similar situations to projects such as these. Because CDD projects are inclusive of children and their families, they appear to be more responsive to the family's needs. Teachers that are considering a home to school communication modality should take into consideration the emerging themes that were developed from this project.

Teachers should also look at the barriers that emerged from this project. Some school districts educate students away from their neighborhood based schools. This becomes especially prevalent when we consider our students with disabilities. School districts have started programs such as “magnet schools.” The “magnet school” concept means that all students with a specific disability will attend a designated school to receive services, if it is deemed necessary in their Individualized Education Plan. This means that a student with a disability could potentially be attending a school that is across town from where they currently reside. This becomes especially predominant in students who are d/Deaf and/or hard of hearing. D/deaf and/or hard of hearing parents, students, and educators may benefit from setting like this because of the culture that surrounds this specific group. However, as this project has found, transportation can often be barrier that hinders participation and communication. If a parent cannot attend a parent teacher conference across town at their student’s school due to a lack of transportation, the teacher and parent may not have an opportunity to create the bond that is necessary to support the student.

It is important that educators attempt to create an atmosphere of trust between home and school. To allow for this, educators should try and enable strategies to promote opportunities. Educators should also provide support strategies for the identified barriers paying close attention to individuals who represent various forms of economic, cultural, ethnic, racial, and disability differences.

Consideration of Findings

Staff and participants both identified opportunities for communication to be self-improvement, sense of community, and developing personal relationships as opportunities. Harrigan and Commons (2015) discussed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs stating that our lower level needs (physiological needs, safety, etc.) must be met before higher level needs can be. Participants must continually be working to improve their personal life. With the improvement of their personal life, comes the improvement of communication with others. The next need that can be met is a sense of belonging in a community (Harrigan & Commons, 2015). If participants continue to meet their needs, they will improve their communication amongst others. Meyer et. al (2011) concluded a set of home visits, supporting the development of personal relationships. The results of the home visits showed that teachers reported better relationships, improved communication, appreciation of the home environment, and a better understanding of the child's behaviors.

Staff and participants both identified a barrier preventing communication to be transportation. Rosenblatt and DeLuca (2012) concluded similar findings. Community members access to reliable public transportation often limits their access to additional resources (Rosenblatt & DeLuca, 2012). Community members often sacrifice their quality of neighborhood to have access to transportation (Roseblatt & DeLuca, 2012).

Further Research

Further research can be conducted on effective communication between both participants and staff in CDD projects, as well as parents and teachers in schools. Further

research in the CDD project should include analyzing the results of this study and implement changes to support the barriers that were identified. Different strategies should be attempted to turn the barriers identified into opportunities for communication. Further research should also be conducted in schools. Educators should try and facilitate strategies to promote opportunities, as well as, provide support strategies for the identified barriers. Schools may also need to conduct similar interview with educators and focus groups with parents to identify school specific opportunities and barriers for communication.

REFERENCES

- Amos Hatch, J. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Arriaga, X. B., & Longoria, Z. N. (2011). Implementation intentions increase parent–teacher communication among Latinos. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 33(4), 365-373. doi:10.1080/01973533.2011.614142
- Baggerly, J. (2006). Service learning with children affected by poverty: Facilitating multicultural competence in counseling education students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 34(4), 244-255. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2006.tb00043.x
- Balli, S. J., Demo, D. H., & Wedman, J. F. (1998). Family involvement with children's homework: An intervention in the middle grades. *Family Relations: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, 47(2), 149-157.
- Bench, S. D., Day, T., & Griffiths, P. (2011). Involving users in the development of effective critical care discharge information: A focus group study. *American Journal of Critical Care*, 20(6), 443-452. doi:10.4037/ajcc2011829
- Bennett-Conroy, W. (2012). Engaging parents of eighth grade students in parent–teacher bidirectional communication. *The School Community Journal*, 22(2), 87-110.
- Bower, H. A., & Griffin, D. (2011). Can the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement work in a high-minority, high-poverty elementary school? A case study. *Professional School Counseling*, 15(2), 77-87. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2011-15.77
- Carter, B. (2014). Child poverty: Limiting children's life chances. *Journal of Child Health Care*, 18(1), 3-5. doi:10.1177/1367493514522726
- Cheatham, G. A., & Ostrosky, M. M. (2011). Whose expertise?: An analysis of advice giving in early childhood parent-teacher conferences. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 25(1), 24-44. doi:10.1080/02568543.2011.533116

- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Dubis, S., & Bernadowski, C. (2015). Communicating with parents of children with special needs in Saudi Arabia: Parents' and teachers' perceptions of using email for regular and ongoing communication. *British Journal of Special Education*, 42(2), 166-182. doi:10.1111/1467-8578.12061
- Duncan, G. J., Ludwig, J., & Magnuson, K. A. (2007). Reducing poverty through preschool interventions. *The Future of Children*, 17(2), 143-160. doi:10.1353/foc.2007.0015
- Eberly, J. L., Joshi, A., & Konzal, J. (2007). Communicating with families across cultures: An investigation of teacher perceptions and practices. *The School Community Journal*, 17(2), 7-26.
- Fang, K. (2006). Designing and implementing a community-driven development programme in Indonesia. *Development in Practice*, 16(1), 74-79.
- Fonchingong, C. (2006). Expanding horizons: Women's voices in community-driven development in the Cameroon grasslands. *GeoJournal*, 65(3), 137-149.
- Gonzalez, L. M., Borders, L. D., Hines, E. M., Villalba, J. A., & Henderson, A. (2013). Parental involvement in children's education: Considerations for school counselors working with Latino immigrant families. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(3), 185-193. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2013-16.183
- Harrigan, W. J., & Commons, M. L. (2015). Replacing Maslow's needs hierarchy with an account based on stage and value. *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, 20(1), 24-31.
- Hesse, C., Rauscher, E. A., Roberts, J. B., & Ortega, S. R. (2014). Investigating the role of hurtful family environment in the relationship between affectionate communication and family satisfaction. *Journal of Family Communication*, 14(2), 112-128. doi:10.1080/15267431.2013.866453

- Howell, A., Caldarella, P., Korth, B., & Young, K. R. (2014). Exploring the social validity of teacher praise notes in elementary school. *Journal of Classroom Interaction, 49*(2), 22-32.
- Jackson, M. R. (2015). Resistance to qual/quant parity: Why the 'paradigm' discussion can't be avoided. *Qualitative Psychology, 2*(2), 181-198.
- Jansen, A. (2015). Positioning and subjectivation in research interviews: Why bother talking to a researcher?. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory & Practice, 18*(1), 27-39.
- Jensen, D. (2006). Using newsletters to create home-school connections. *The Reading Teacher, 60*(2), 186-190. doi:10.1598/RT.60.2.8
- Jepson, M., Abbott, D., & Hastie, J. (2015). 'This is another personal question': Research interviews and discussing sensitive issues with men with life-limiting conditions. *International Journal of Men's Health, 14*(3), 273-286.
- Kraft, M., & Rogers, T. (2015). The underutilized potential of teacher-to-parent communication: Evidence from a field experiment. *Economics of Education Review, 47*(4), 49-63.
- Ladd, H. F. (2012). Education and poverty: Confronting the evidence. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 31*(2), 203-227. doi:10.1002/pam.21615
- Mansuri, G., & Rao, V. (2004). Community-based and -driven development: A critical review. *The World Bank Research Observer, 19*(1), 1-39.
- Manz, P. (2012). Home-based head start and family involvement: An exploratory study of the associations among home visiting frequency and family involvement dimensions. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 40*(4), 231-238. doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0512-2
- Martens, P. J., Chateau, D. G., Burland, E. MJ., Finlayson, G. S., Smith, M. J., Taylor, C. R., Brownell, M., Nickel, N., Katz, A., & Bolton, J. M. (2014). The effect of neighborhood socioeconomic status on education and health outcomes for children living in social housing. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*(11), 2103-2113. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302133

- McNaughton, D., Hamlin, D., McCarthy, J., Head-Reeves, D., & Schreiner, M. (2008). Learning to listen: Teaching an active listening strategy to preservice education professionals. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 27(4), 223-231. doi:10.1177/0271121407311241
- Meyer, J. A., & Mann, M. B. (2006). Teachers' perceptions of the benefits of home visits for early elementary children. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(1), 93-97. doi:10.1007/s10643-006-0113-z
- Meyer, J. A., Mann, M. B., & Becker, J. (2011). A five-year follow-up: Teachers' perceptions of the benefits of home visits for early elementary children. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(3), 191-196. doi:10.1007/s10643-011-0461-1
- Nzinga-Johnson, S., Baker, J.A., & Aupperlee, J. (2009). Teacher-parent relationships and school involvement among racially and educationally diverse parents of kindergartners. *The Elementary School Journal*, 110(1), 81-91.
- Payne, R. K. (2013). A framework for understanding poverty: A cognitive approach (6th ed.). Highlands, TX: aha! Process.
- Pillet-Shore, D. (2015). Being a 'good parent' in parent-teacher conferences. *Journal of Communication*, 65(2), 373-395. doi:10.1111/jcom.12146
- Pillet-Shore, D. (2016). Criticizing another's child: How teachers evaluate students during parent-teacher conferences. *Language in Society*, 45(1), 33-58. doi:10.1017/S0047404515000809
- Rosenblatt, P., & DeLuca, S. (2012). 'We don't live outside, we live in here': Neighborhood and residential mobility decisions among low-income families. *City & Community*, 11(3), 254-284. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6040.2012.01413
- Strom, P.S., & Strom, R.D. (2002). Teacher-parent communication reform. *The High School Journal*, 86(2), 14-21.

Symeou, L., Roussounidou, E., & Michaelides, M. (2012). 'I feel much more confident now to talk with parents': An evaluation of in-service training on teacher–parent communication. *The School Community Journal*, 22(1), 65-88.

Themes and codes. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.hud.ac.uk/hhs/research/template-analysis/technique/themes-and-codes/>

Thompson, B. (2008). Characteristics of parent-teacher e-mail communication. *Communication Education*, 57(2), 201-223. doi:10.1080/03634520701852050

Van Voorhis, F. (2003). Interactive homework in middle school: Effects on family involvement and science achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 96(6), 323-338.

APPENDICIES

Appendix A. Informed Consent – CDD Participants

Family Consent to Participate in a Research Study Missouri State University College of Health and Human Services

Communication with Families in a Midwest Public School District

Introduction

You have been asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the study and the procedures involved. The investigator will also explain the project to you in detail. If you have any questions about the study or your role in the study, you may ask the student investigator, Miranda Wickam or, contact the principal investigator Karen Engler at:

KarenEngler@MissouriState.edu or (417) 836 – 6674.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will need to sign this form giving us your permission to be involved in the study. Taking part in this study is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part but later change your mind, you may stop before the end of the focus group. If you decide to stop, you do not have to give a reason and there will be no negative consequences for ending your participation.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of the study is to find out what families think and feel about how they communicate with staff members and each other within the community driven development project.

Description of Procedures

If you agree to be part of this study, you will participate in a single focus group that will not exceed one hour at the Fairbanks during a Thursday night “Circles” session. You will be asked five questions and are encouraged to answer them openly. During the hour, you will also have the chance to add things that are not presented within the questions. Your answer to these questions will be recorded on an audio recorder. The only people in the room will be investigators on the project.

What are the risks?

The risk of this study is a loss of confidentiality. All efforts will be made to ensure that your confidentiality is protected. Confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher. All information will be kept on an encrypted flash drive that will only be accessed by investigators on this project. Your name or personal identifying information will be kept separate from the data that is collected and will not be used in any published reports of this research. This personally identifiable information, including this consent forms, will be kept on paper format in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigators office. After three years, this information will be destroyed.

What are the benefits?

You may not benefit directly from this study. However, the information from this study may help to find different ways that educators and other professions can improve communication with families. The results from this research have the ability to be implemented within the community driven development project to improve communication and make life easier for everyone in multiple ways.

Consent to Participate

I have read and understand the information in this form. I have been encouraged to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this form, I agree voluntarily to participate in this study. I know that I can withdraw from the study before the end of the focus group. I have received a copy of this form for my own records. If you have any concerns please contact the student investigator, Miranda Wickam, or the principal investigator, Karen Engler at: KarenEngler@MissouriState.edu or (417) 836 – 6674.

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix B. Informed Consent – Staff Participants

Staff Consent to Participate in a Research Study Missouri State University College of Health and Human Services

Family Communication in Under Resourced Families in a Midwest Public School District

Introduction

You have been asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the study and the procedures involved. The investigator will also explain the project to you in detail. If you have any questions about the study or your role in the study, you may ask the student investigator, Miranda Wickam or, contact the principal investigator Karen Engler at: KarenEngler@MissouriState.edu or (417) 836 – 6674.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will need to sign this form giving us your permission to be involved in the study. Taking part in this study is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part but later change your mind, you may stop at any time. If you decide to stop, you do not have to give a reason and there will be no negative consequences for ending your participation. If you decide later that you would like to withdrawal your information, you have that right. Please contact the student or principal investigator to have your information removed.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose for this study is to investigate the different strategies and techniques currently being used within the community driven development project to communicate with and assist the families within their programs from both the staff and participant's perspectives.

Description of Procedures

If you agree to be part of this study, you will participate in a single interview that will not exceed one-hour at the Fairbanks during a day and time of your choosing. You will be asked thirteen questions and are encouraged to answer them openly. Your answer to these questions will be recorded on an audio recorder. The only people in the room will be investigators on the project.

What are the risks?

The risk of this study is a loss of confidentiality. All efforts will be made to ensure that your confidentiality is protected. Confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher. All information will be kept on an encrypted flash drive that will only be accessed by investigators on this project. Your name or personal identifying information will be kept separate from the data that is collected and will not be used in any published reports of this research. All results will be presented in aggregate. This personally identifiable information, including this consent forms, will be kept on paper format in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigators office. After three years, this information will be destroyed.

What are the benefits?

You may not benefit directly from this study. However, the information from this study may help to create a set of strategies that help educators and other professionals improve communication to under resourced families. The results from this research have the ability to be implemented within the community driven development project to better the participant and staff experience.

Consent to Participate

I have read and understand the information in this form. I have been encouraged to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this form, I agree voluntarily to participate in this study. I know that I can withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this form for my own records. If you have any concerns please contact the student investigator, Miranda Wickam, or the principal investigator, Karen Engler at: KarenEngler@MissouriState.edu or (417) 836 – 6674.

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix C. Focus Group with CDD Participants Questions

Project Participant Focus Group Questions

1. What do you hope to gain from participation in the CDD project?
 2. In what ways has the (site name) and the staff helped you and your family participate?
 3. Help me understand the best way(s) that communication occurs about your needs and what is offered to address them?
 4. Can you offer some suggestions of how those that work in these types of projects, could better meet the needs of families in terms of communication?
- What other kinds of suggestions or thoughts do you have about your participation in the CDD?

Appendix D. One-on-One Structured Staff Interview Questions

Staff Interview Questions

1. What is your current role or title?
2. Describe your previous experiences working with families in a case management approach or in other ways to provide supports?
3. How familiar are you with the Jacksonville 1000 in 1000 approach?
4. How many families or contacts have you facilitated related to the first, second, and/or third neighborhood cohort?
5. What was your method for determining who would be a good fit for the community driven development project?
6. How did you communicate to the family when they did not meet criteria for inclusion in the community driven development project?
7. Could you describe how you linked the families to key resources or partners in the community driven development project that addressed needs for assets or targets for improvement?
8. Can you describe the nature of the collaboration or what evidence you obtain to know that the collaboration on behalf of families have had a positive impact?
9. What are the most effective strategies for communicating with those you are working with tied to the community driven development project?
10. What are the central barriers for communication with families in the project?
11. What other barriers do you see facing families that would permit them to fully benefit from participation in the project?
12. How do you make adaptation for language barriers or linguistic difference (including ASL)?
13. In the time remaining, can you describe the general benefits of a neighborhood based approach to supporting families compared to the more traditional approach of families being served by professionals outside of the immediate area?

Appendix E. Focus Group One Expanded Set Questions

1. What are you hoping to get from participating in the NWP?
 - How many were hoping to see something better happen in terms of where you are living?
 - Financial independence, what does that feel like? What does that look like?
2. In what ways do you think the Fairbanks and the staff can help you and your family participate?
 - Is that fact that this building is in your neighborhood made a difference in all these things to your doing to better your life and the lives of your family opposed to having to drive across town to go other places?
3. Help us understand the best way(s) that communication occurs about your needs and what is offered to address them?
 - So some people come in and think that they know what they are going to do to help you. Can you help us understand how this program has been different and been responsive to your needs?
 - Is it easier to come to one place? A one stop shop?
 - Do you feel better connected?
4. Can you offer some suggestions of how those that work in these types of projects, could better meet the needs of families in terms of communication?
 - How do they stay in touch? What does that look like?
 - So communication with you guys for those of you that have school age children. Do you think there is something that the schools can learn based on how Amy and Kristina have reached out to you with communication?
 - So internet access is pretty good? You can usually get on it?
 - How many of you get email at home?
5. What other kinds of suggestions or thoughts do you have about your participation in the project?

Appendix F. Focus Group Two Expanded Set Questions

1. What are you hoping to get from participating in the NWP?
 - What kind of goals do you have?
 - What does money management and success look like for you guys?
2. In what ways do you think the Fairbanks and the staff can help you and your family participate?
 - What do those resources look like for you guys?
3. Help us understand the best way(s) that communication occurs about your needs and what is offered to address them?
 - Do you prefer to have communication one on one in person?
 - Is that easier in a public environment or in your home environment?
 - Do you use any kind of email communication? Or you may not prefer email but how many would use it regularly?
 - Another big one seems to be Facebook. Is everyone on Facebook?
4. Can you offer some suggestions of how those that work in these types of projects, could better meet the needs of families in terms of communication?
 - How did you learn about the project? How did you hear about it first? Was it a friend or family? How did you know it was here?

What other kinds of suggestions or thoughts do you have about your participation in the project?

Appendix G. Focus Group Three Expanded Set Questions

1. What are you hoping to get from participating in the NWP?
 - How do we help people get to the next step?
2. In what ways do you think the Fairbanks and the staff can help you and your family participate?
 - How did you find out about this project?
 - Is anyone looking for more consistency in financial stability or housing?
3. Help us understand the best way(s) that communication occurs about your needs and what is offered to address them?
 - How many people could use and think email would be an okay form of communication?
4. Can you offer some suggestions of how those that work in these types of projects, could better meet the needs of families in terms of communication?
 - Is there any suggestions you could give any of us to make your participation in this project more doable?
5. What other kinds of suggestions or thoughts do you have about your participation in the project?